



# Telejustice at Work

How Video Communications  
Reduces Operating Costs and  
Improves Efficiencies Throughout  
the Criminal Justice Process

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## Executive Summary

**The problem.** Throughout America's justice system, agencies at all levels face ever-shrinking budgets, even as caseloads continue to rise. Yet inherent process inefficiencies – and an institutional reliance on in-person communication – make it difficult for administrators to trim expenses without sacrificing levels of service and security, or risking compromises in due process.

As demands on agencies intensify, the traditional ways of doing business in person are growing too costly, too time-consuming, and too inefficient. And by doing nothing, managers risk lay-offs or painful (and often ineffective) reallocation of resources.

**The solution.** In these times of tight budgets and shrinking tax revenues, a growing number of justice agencies are seizing the opportunity to apply proven technologies in ways that help them cut operational expenses and improve productivity – in short, do more with less. By making strategic use of today's high-definition (HD) video communications systems, agencies from coast to coast are fulfilling their need to conduct business face to face, but without incurring the costs associated with appearing before judges, offering testimony, escorting prisoners, conducting or receiving training, or attending meetings.

Agencies throughout the country report that video communications has helped them:

- Process more cases
- Increase security and reduce risk to the public
- Expand staff expertise
- Reduce or eliminate overtime
- Improve prisoner re-integration success
- Ease visitation processes for families

If that sounds too good to be true, ask administrators at the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences, whose use of video communications allowed them to save \$5,000 in a single day, and \$91,000 over six months. Or query Michigan's Department of Corrections (MDOC), which has transformed its parole hearings process by conducting 13,000 hearings over video in 2007. In the process, MDOC has reduced the time required to render a decision from two weeks to two days.

**The Polycom advantage.** As outlined in this paper, more agencies than ever are streamlining their processes and reducing operational costs with solutions from Polycom, the global leader in telepresence, video and voice communication solutions. Robust, reliable and proven Polycom solutions range from desktop systems perfect for field work, to mobile carts that can bring interactive HD video communication to labs and conference rooms, to true room telepresence environments ideal for expert testimonies delivered remotely and in full 1080p HD. Delivering sharp, smooth-motion video, along with HD audio and content, Polycom systems enable true interactivity without the lag times and jitter that once plagued video networks.

Resources have never been more valuable. Read this paper to find out how agencies like yours rely on Polycom solutions to make the most of theirs.

## Containing Costs as Caseloads Grow

Plummeting tax revenues throughout the United States have triggered a combined \$215 billion state government budget gap for fiscal years 2009 and 2010.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the demands on justice agencies continue to increase.

- **Forensics labs** are feeling the economic pinch even as they work to close record levels of backlogged cases (those not completed in 30 days). An estimated 359,000 U.S. crime lab cases were backlogged at the end of 2005, the last year for which data was available. Backlogs grew 24 percent from 2002.<sup>2</sup>
- In California, the **judicial branch** is bracing for cuts of \$676 million, while the state struggles with a "tidal wave" of new cases.<sup>3</sup>
- Georgia's Council of **Superior Court** Judges is attempting to hear cases with 70 fewer judges after a state-mandated 6 percent budget cut – a move that has caused problems in a state that had already faced growing backlogs.<sup>4</sup>
- Slumping tax collections have caused Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and South Carolina to slash **juvenile justice** spending, in some areas by more than 20 percent.<sup>5</sup>
- **Corrections programs** are the No. 1 target of lawmakers looking for areas to trim expenses,<sup>6</sup> despite that more than 2.3 million people were incarcerated in U.S. prisons or jails in 2008 – an all-time record.<sup>7</sup>

Under pressure to do more with less, agency administrators find themselves forced to reallocate resources, weighing available funds against the need to provide proper security during prisoner transports or keep up with growing numbers of warrant requests, investigations, forensic tests, hearings, expert testimonies, and inmate visitations.

Or they make no changes at all, hoping instead for the situation to improve before it grows unsustainable. While they wait, process inefficiencies and vulnerabilities multiply.

## Assessing the Real Cost of Inefficiencies

From bench warrants and arraignments to expert testimonies and parole hearings, the justice system is largely built around face-to-face communication. In many cases, this is mandated by law. In others, it is the result of procedures institutionalized long before the digital age.

Communicating in person involves constant travel (both locally and regionally), and the associated time required for staff, officers, expert witnesses and others to appear before judges, offer testimony, escort prisoners, conduct or receive training, or attend meetings.

Every one of these activities carries direct costs such as overtime, whether agencies measure them or not. Along with the hard costs of travel – personnel expenses, fuel, mileage, airfare, lodging and meals – there is the passive expense of productivity lost to travel. Clearly, the more hours spent traveling, the less time justice employees have to whittle down backlogs, reduce case resolution times, and patrol the streets.

Alabama's Department of Forensic Sciences (ADFS), for instance, frequently must send lab staff to attend meetings in Huntsville. In travel time alone, each trip represents a full day's work of bench time lost, according to James Foster, senior IT specialist for ADFS.

The essential question is how to handle more work without hiring additional staff. For a growing number of state, county and municipal agencies, the answer is video communications.

## The Case for Video Communications

For years, conducting the business of criminal justice has involved a combination of face-to-face meetings, telephone and fax communication, and data sharing via paper or email. These are all familiar avenues, but they vary widely in efficiency.

As budgets tighten, more agencies are implementing collaboration networks capable of supporting voice, video and data collaboration to:

- **Reduce operational and capital costs.** Cut costs and time spent traveling by judges, attorneys, litigants, security personnel, offenders and witnesses.
- **Save taxpayer dollars and boost efficiencies.** Process more cases in less time, reducing backlog and improving agency performance.
- **Increase security and reduce risk.** Maintain higher levels of security by reducing detainee transports.
- **Streamline the justice process.** Obtain warrants, interview witnesses, and conclude hearings more swiftly.

## The Hard Costs of Prisoner Transports

*Corrections and law enforcement agencies are typically responsible for transporting prisoners to and from arraignments, hearings and trials. Providing this support comes with hard costs that are measurable.*

*"On any given day, Pennsylvania needs to transport thousands of prisoners from one place to another," says Andy Keyser, former CIO of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and current CEO of e-Data Experts, Inc., an IT consulting firm. "The costs are phenomenal,"*

*In Philadelphia, for instance, it costs the Philadelphia Sheriff's Office \$79 to transport an inmate to and from the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in northeast Philadelphia to the Criminal Justice Center in Center City.<sup>8</sup>*

*Not surprisingly, the costs increase when prisoners must be escorted from further away. Transportation costs average \$750 for inmates housed in far northwest Pennsylvania and \$240 to transport state inmates housed at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford, just 32 miles away from Center City.*

*Those figures don't even include costs of security and losses due to proceedings cancelled after the transport has commenced – a common occurrence in today's justice system. And they don't reflect the non-financial cost of exposing the public to potential security threats posed by moving violent criminals through the community.*

## Not Your Father's Videoconferencing

*Technology and network limitations caused early videoconferencing systems to earn some mixed reviews. For years, IT administrators faced a difficult choice: either make costly network upgrades to enable acceptable video frame rates, or put up with frustrating lag times, dropped connections, and choppy video. Even if early-generation systems cut costs and streamlined processes for agencies that deployed them, others opted to maintain the status quo.*

*Much has changed since then, even though many perceptions of videoconferencing are still shaped by technology limitations that have long since been solved. Today's videoconferencing systems are more portable than ever, and yet they still can deliver video that offers smooth, natural motion and sharp, clear images – in resolutions that scale to full 1080p HD.*

*For evidence of this, look to Michigan. Mark Esqueda, Delta County's chief assistant prosecutor, says the state's use of Polycom HDX telepresence systems for expert testimonies from forensic scientists is successful in part because the video quality is so good. "It's almost as if the person is there live," says Esqueda. "The picture and sound are crisp, and the experience is totally interactive. We see them, and they see us. If I ask a question, the witness hears it, and everyone hears the reply."*

*Today's Polycom solutions also allow people to experience HD audio and share HD content, such as documents, diagrams and photographs. And they're vastly simpler to use, with one-click dialing to video call participants, whether they're located in an immersive telepresence room or using a desktop video application. And a low-cost software solution enables up to four locations to be connected on a video call.*

*Another major advantage: Polycom solutions don't require \$1 million network investments. "A \$60 monthly broadband IP connection provides enough bandwidth to conduct business via video," notes Keyser, who points out that Polycom's Lost Packet Recovery™ (Polycom LPR™) technology removes latency and jitter from video calls made over the public Internet. And agencies already invested in ISDN can deploy a range of Polycom systems, thanks to such features as IP-to-ISDN routing.*

- **Expand staff expertise.** Efficiently train staff on new procedures and regulations.
- **Improve prisoner re-integration success.** Provide effective correctional educational programs prior to release.
- **Ease visitation process for families.** Enable video visitations with prisoners, reducing cost and time burden of travel for relatives – and the risk of contraband exchange.

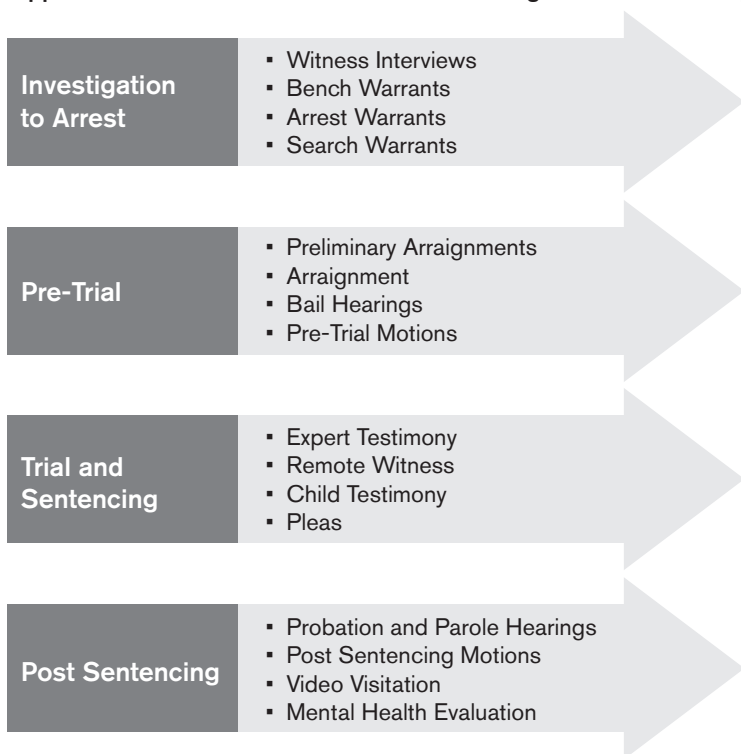
Available from industry leaders like Polycom, the range of cost-effective video communications solutions can scale from secure and convenient mobile systems all the way to desktop-, wall- and floor-mounted solutions that broadcast and receive video, audio and content in high definition (HD).

In the past, the very thought of video communications networks prompted IT managers to worry about firewall control, network homogeneity and transmission quality (see "Not Your Father's Videoconferencing").

But for business managers, deployment costs were a primary concern. "Administrators used to think they needed expensive equipment for video communications, and they felt they couldn't justify the costs," notes Andy Keyser, the IT consultant and former CIO of Pennsylvania's corrections system. "But with the cost savings that a full-featured video communications network delivers, even conservative estimates show that an agency's initial investment can be easily recouped in less than a year – and sometimes as quickly as six months."

At each stage of the justice process, these solutions offer a chance to create cost-saving efficiencies that help agencies perform better, and make the most of human and budgetary resources.

### Opportunities for Video Communications Throughout the Justice Cycle



*From interviewing witnesses during the investigation stage to visitations with incarcerated offenders, video communications offers justice agencies a way to cut costs, streamline processes and improve security by enabling face-to-face communication with little to no transportation*

## Measuring the Value of Video

Evidence drawn from the real-world experience of police agencies, corrections departments, courts and parole boards shows how agencies are reducing their costs and implementing process efficiencies with the strategic use of the latest Polycom video communications solutions.

The chart featured on Page 4 categorizes the justice process in four general stages:

- Investigation to Arrest
- Pre Trial
- Trial and Sentencing
- Post Sentencing

By studying results achieved throughout this process, it's possible to gain a clear idea of the advantage agencies gain from implementing video communication networks.

### Investigation to Arrest

Processing an arrest takes time, and that's an increasingly precious commodity for law enforcement officials. Investigation, physical arrest, fingerprinting, mug shots, formalized charges, incident reports, incarceration – each step requires a time investment for officers and staff, and keeps them from tending to other duties. Responsibilities can even require travel, from appearing before a judge for a search or arrest warrant, to transporting a defendant for preliminary hearing and appearing at subsequent hearings throughout the process.

To streamline these steps, many high-arrest jurisdictions have moved to a central booking system that allows officers to drop off offenders for processing. These central sites have the ability to electronically fingerprint, take digital photos, and perform other necessary booking functions. To save even more time, many have also begun to implement video conferencing to perform preliminary arraignments and bail hearings – a move that also reduces transports and increases public safety. And as network costs continue to plummet, more police agencies have begun to invest in video conferencing equipment to communicate with the judicial system.

In Pennsylvania alone, more than 300,000 crimes are committed annually, resulting in more than 85,000 arrests.<sup>9</sup> Each of these arrests results in at least a preliminary arraignment in front of a Magisterial District Judge. A recent initiative launched by the **Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts** uses Polycom video communications to enable Magisterial District Judges to conduct preliminary arraignments via video. Instead of engaging a constable, sheriff or police officer to escort defendants to court, video procedures allow judges to arraign or hold hearings with defendants from secure locations within central booking centers, local police departments, jails, state police barracks, and state and county correctional institutions. The project

initially involved installing 312 units throughout the state.

The video conferencing equipment significantly reduces defendant transportation costs while enhancing safety for judges, their staffs, law enforcement and others who have business in their courts since fewer detainees are present. According to a statement released by the AOPC, in Lancaster County – a medium-sized county in central Pennsylvania with approximately 20 district courts – officials have estimated that conducting arraignments via video conference will annually save more than \$115,000 in constable transportation fees alone.

With the installation of 140 additional video conferencing units, soon judges anywhere within Pennsylvania will be able to conduct arraignments and hearings with a secure Internet connection using desktop monitors with a high-definition video and voice conferencing network.<sup>10</sup>

### Pre Trial

In the **1st Judicial District of Pennsylvania**, one defendant recently agreed to a plea bargain via video conference resulting in the resolution of four cases that could have required four bus trips down I-95 from Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility (CFCF) in Northeast Philadelphia to the Criminal Justice Center in Center City. The plea bargain took place as part of a video conferencing pilot conducted by the court and the **Philadelphia Prison System**.

When court administrators and prison officials see programs like this in action, they immediately look to expand their use of video communications. According to CFCF Warden Clyde D. Gainey, an average of 200 to 300 inmates is taken from correctional facilities to court hearings every business day.

Louis Giorla, Philadelphia Prison System commissioner, says it's safer and less time-intensive to move inmates within the correctional facilities in which they are held, rather than transporting them to court. "It's much better to move somebody a couple hundred yards," Giorla says.

Video communication is also saving the agencies money. Court figures show that, in May 2009 alone, 291 video conferences saved \$41,415 in transport costs.

An added benefit: Video-based hearings reduce wasteful reschedulings. For various reasons, a third of the inmates brought to Center City every day see their cases rescheduled. By broadening the use of video communications, officials can eliminate some of the money wasted on ultimately pointless prisoner transports, according to Everett Gillison, deputy mayor for public safety.

Better still, video hearings are far less susceptible to rescheduling, according to Trial Division Administrative Judge D. Webster Keogh. Video communications, says Keogh, delivers "great savings in security, transport and time."<sup>11</sup>



## **Trial and Sentencing: Forensics Sciences**

With deep budget cuts effectively suspended travel between forensics facilities throughout the state, the **Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences** (ADFS) recently faced a serious problem for experts who needed to regularly attend vital in-person training to keep abreast of the latest safety protocols and other developments in toxicology, pathology, firearms, and DUI evidence analysis.

Using grant funding, ADFS equipped all of its 11 labs with Polycom HDX 8000 and HDX 9000 room telepresence systems, creating an agency-wide video collaboration network.

"We used to travel to sites for training or have people travel to a central location for a class," explains James Foster, the senior IT specialist for ADFS. "When travel was eliminated, video conferencing jumped in and we had a virtual statewide meeting that saved us \$5,000 in one day. We haven't looked back since."

In just the first six months of 2009, ADFS saved \$91,000 in travel costs. How? By pathologists, departmental directors, discipline chiefs and administrative services personnel using Polycom telepresence to participate in statewide meetings, regional meetings, training of all types and even job interviews. And through the use of a Polycom firewall traversal unit, analysts in forensic biology are efficiently working with other agencies by conferencing with the FBI to provide input for its Combined DNA Index System.

"The more our people have gotten used to it, the more they use it," Foster says.

For the **Michigan State Police (MSP) Forensic Science Division**, recapturing "bench time" in the agency's labs is a primary benefit of MSP's growing video communications network.

Nearly 1,000 times a year, MSP forensic scientists deliver expert testimony at criminal trials around the state. The trips to courtrooms throughout Michigan – including those located across Lake Michigan and Lake Huron in the Upper Peninsula – can last up to three days, and those absences impact productivity.

"We receive between 75 and 100 blood alcohol cases a day," says Inspector Greg Michaud, assistant division commander for MSP's Forensic Science Division. "Like all departments, we've undergone budget cuts over the past several years. That means we have less money for travel and overtime."

Looking to more efficiently address a growing case backlog (and the overtime costs associated with managing it), MSP administrators began using Polycom HDX 4000 telepresence solutions combined with Polycom room and desktop video communications systems to provide expert testimonies – a process that reduces the impact on productivity from days to as little as 15 minutes.

In the program's first six months, MSP forensics experts delivered 20 expert testimonies via video.

Analysts delivered remote testimonies in two high-profile drunk driving trials in Delta County, located a full day's travel from MSP's Lansing headquarters. By testifying via videoconference, MSP estimates it saved 46 hours of analyst bench time, not to mention the travel costs.

Eventually, scientists at all seven MSP labs will testify remotely. "We'll continue to drive adoption," says Michaud. "Judges realize this is the wave of the future. We hope to testify remotely in hundreds of cases every year."

## **Post Sentencing: Parole Hearings**

Leveraging an extensive – and successful – video communications network used by **Michigan's Department of Corrections** (MDOC) for telemedicine, training, project management and administrative meetings, Michigan's Parole Board has transformed the state's parole hearings process, with 13,000 interviews conducted by video in 2007.

In Michigan, three members of the 10-member board must evaluate each case. Traditionally, that required board members to travel to MDOC facilities to conduct hearings in person with prisoners.

"It once took two weeks to arrive at a decision, and now it takes two days," says Lynette Holloway, video conferencing coordinator for MDOC's Bureau of Fiscal Management. "Interviews are done over the Polycom systems and information is shared electronically. This dramatically increases the board's capacity to process cases."

MDOC also conducts prisoner psychological evaluations and misconduct hearings via videoconference. "By keeping officers from having to go on the road to attend hearings in person," says Holloway, "we save even more time."

Holloway says MDOC saves \$125,000 annually by reducing prisoner transports for telemedicine alone – a figure that doesn't factor in savings from parole board meetings, training and more. "The savings we're seeing—both in money and in time—would be impossible to achieve without videoconferencing," she says.

## **Calculating the Savings**

To estimate one agency's potential savings from the use of video communications, it's helpful break down the likely costs associated with the ongoing transport of detainees to and from courtrooms, and then calculate the savings that a simple, point-to-point Polycom video communications network would bring over four years.

## Annual transport costs of \$41,739

This model is based on a justice agency facing the following annual transport costs:

291 local (in-county) transports @ \$79 each = \$22,989  
 75 out-of-county transports @ \$250 each = \$18,750  
 Total annual transport costs = \$41,739

The model estimates savings of basic, ongoing costs that are likely to be incurred for each transport: fuel, vehicle wear and tear, tolls, and meals. Note that other variables can drive up the costs of many transports. These include the need for up to two security escorts per transport, and docket delays and schedule changes that frequently occur after transports have already been initiated.

## Year 1 video solutions investment of \$31,698

The example assumes the acquisition of two Polycom HD telepresence solutions – a desktop-based Polycom HDX 4000 Series personal telepresence system for use in the corrections facility and an HDX 8000 Series room telepresence solution for installation in the courthouse.

Estimated Year 1 costs are:

Polycom systems	\$21,698
Installation	\$4,000
Training	\$1,500
Network (Router, switches, etc.)	\$2,000
Maintenance and Support	\$2,500
Total Year 1 costs	\$31,698 <sup>12</sup>

## Achieving break-even in less than a year

If the agency eliminates transports in favor of video communications, it will achieve break-even within the first year.

Total Year 1 investment	\$31,698
Total Year 1 defrayed transports	\$41,739
Net Year 1 savings	\$10,041

## Saving \$130,188 over four years

After Year 1, the savings from replacing transports with video communications increase dramatically. With system acquisition and deployment costs out of the way, the agency need only cover ongoing expenses for network, maintenance and support. Factoring in 3 percent inflation for these ongoing costs, they would amount to:

Year 2	\$4,120
Year 3	\$4,243
Year 4	\$4,371

The same 3 percent annual rise would apply to the costs of physical detainee transports – costs that are defrayed by replacing those transports with video. Assuming the number of transports does not increase across four years, they would amount to:

Year 2	\$42,991
Year 3	\$44,281
Year 4	\$45,609

The result is a savings of \$130,286 across four years of Polycom system ownership:

Video Solution Costs	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	Acquisition, Deployment, Network, Maintenance and Support	Network, Maintenance and Support	Network, Maintenance and Support	Network, Maintenance and Support
	\$31,698	\$4,120	\$4,243	\$4,371
Savings from Defrayed Transports	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	\$41,739	\$42,991	\$44,281	\$45,609
Annual Net Savings	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	\$10,041	\$38,871	\$40,038	\$41,238
Total Four-Year Savings				\$130,188

This breakdown can easily be modified to estimate savings for a particular department simply by adjusting the number of annual transports and, if different from the example, average transport costs.

**Consult your Polycom Account Manager for profiling savings for a customized savings scenario.**

## Selecting the Right Solution

Whether a network is IP- or ISDN-based, or if an agency requires simple point-to-point calls or multipoint connections, or if HD is a must or strictly optional, Polycom has the right systems to create the most appropriate network for an agency's needs.

Agencies considering a video network deployment have a range of options available to them.

Deploying Video Communications Throughout the Justice Process			
Stage	Function	Video System Option	Network Options
Investigation to Arrest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Witness Interviews</li> <li>Bench Warrant</li> <li>Arrest Warrant</li> <li>Search Warrant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HDX 4000 Personal Telepresence</li> <li>HDX 6000/7000/8000 Room Telepresence</li> <li>RSS 2000 Recording Solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public IP               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cable, DSL</li> </ul> </li> <li>Agency provided IP Network</li> <li>ISDN</li> </ul>
Pre Trial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preliminary Arraignment</li> <li>Arraignment</li> <li>Bail Hearings</li> <li>Pre Trial Motions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HDX 4000 Personal Telepresence</li> <li>HDX 6000/7000/8000 Room Telepresence</li> <li>RMX 1000 Conference Platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public IP               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cable, DSL</li> </ul> </li> <li>Agency provided IP Network</li> <li>ISDN</li> </ul>
Trial and Sentencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expert Testimony</li> <li>Remote Witness</li> <li>Child Testimony</li> <li>Pleas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HDX 4000 Personal Telepresence</li> <li>HDX 6000/7000/8000 Room Telepresence</li> <li>RMX 1000 Conference Platform</li> <li>RSS 2000 Recording Solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public IP               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cable, DSL</li> </ul> </li> <li>Agency provided IP Network</li> <li>ISDN</li> </ul>
Post Sentencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probation and Parole Hearings</li> <li>Post Sentencing Motions</li> <li>Video Visitation</li> <li>Mental Health Evaluations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HDX 4000 Personal Telepresence</li> <li>HDX 6000/7000/8000 Room Telepresence</li> <li>Judicial Wall Unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public IP               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cable, DSL</li> </ul> </li> <li>Agency provided IP Network</li> <li>ISDN</li> </ul>

## For More Information

To find out how Polycom can help your agency cut costs, heighten productivity, and streamline process, visit [www.polycom.com](http://www.polycom.com) or call 1.800.POLYCOM.



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- <sup>12</sup> Capital investment costs based on list prices for Polycom solutions as of Sept. 2009. Individual purchase costs likely to vary based on unit volumes, optional features and other factors.

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